



Best Practices Database

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Public Works and Environmental Improvements, Jonava *Lithuania*

Best Practice

New for 2002

- Categories:**
- Urban and Regional Planning:
 - localizing Agenda 21
 - Poverty Eradication:
 - job creation
 - vocational training
 - Environmental Management:
 - ecological sustainability
 - environmentally sound technologies
 - urban greening

Level of Activity: City/Town

Ecosystem: Continental

Summary

The purpose of establishing a recreational zone in Jonava, Lithuania, was three-fold. Firstly, it was acknowledged that public works projects carried out by local labour exchanges and municipalities often have solved social problems rather than unemployment problems in the sense that the participants temporarily have received an income and/or have regained the right to receive unemployment benefit, but have returned to unemployment after the termination of the public works project. One aim of the initiative is to increase the employability of the participants by including vocational training and work experience within the environmental field skills that are increasingly in demand. Secondly, a sector-integrated approach has been introduced focusing on ensuring the involvement of all necessary stakeholders. The successful fulfilment of this purpose is reflected in the number and types of project participants. Finally, the aim was to create an environmentally sustainable zone for family leisure i.e. swimming and sunbathing and at the same time enhancing environmental awareness among the visitors.

The project achievements verifying that the project purposes have been achieved include that during the period August-October 2001, 12 unemployed underwent both general environmental awareness education and gained environmental skills e.g. regarding forest and lake cleaning. 1 person got a permanent job early in the process, 1 person will continue as full-time guard in the recreational zone, and further 2 persons are still engaged in the zone development (January 2002). 3 persons have got permanent jobs within forestry, 4 persons have returned to unemployment, and 1 person left the project due to illness. The zone to be opened June 2002 include a clean lake, a sand beach, a forest/park area etc.

Narrative

Situation Before the Initiative Began

The selected lake area in Jonava - around 100 km northeast of Vilnius - has a fine biodiversity with many different plants - but the area was overgrown and the lake was not clean.

Jonava region has at present (November 2001) a rate of unemployment above 21%, well above the national average of around 12%.

Establishment of Priorities

The initiative had both employability priorities and environmental priorities.

Improvements to public works programmes were needed to increase the chances for participants getting a permanent job afterwards. This has been acknowledged by the local labour exchange and the municipality responsible for the programmes. The increase in employability could happen through obtaining environmental skills - which are in demand.

Urban greening - hereunder through a recreational zone - would make Jonava (or another selected area) a more attractive area - for both inhabitants and visitors and regarding attracting new enterprises.

Formulation of Objectives and Strategies

The specific objectives and strategies formulated to contribute to the above priorities were:

Â· to create a "sunshine story", i.e. a pilot project which successfully integrates environmental and employment aspects - that can inspire other regions

Â· to enhance collaboration between the necessary stakeholders - through a sector-integrated approach

Â· to develop ecologically an actual area - through the establishment of a recreational zone

Â· to improve directly the employability of the participants

These objectives and strategies were established through a co-operation between a local working group, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange, and Danish experts.

Mobilisation of Resources

With support from the Danish Ministry of Employment, a Lithuanian-Danish project was implemented during 2000-2001 to strengthen the environmental awareness of civil servants with regard to integrating environmental considerations into the appraisal and implementation of public works programmes. One of the conclusions from the project was that Lithuanian experience with including environmental aspects in public works projects until now was very limited, and so there had been little to build upon.

At a Steering Committee meeting in Vilnius in February 2001, it was therefore decided to carry out a good pilot public works project combining employment and environmental aspects in Lithuania - which could be used for demonstration purposes.

A selection of municipalities and local labour exchanges were then given the opportunity to apply for being the host of the pilot project. The Lithuanian Labour Exchange was given the task to select the best application leading to the project in Jonava.

From Jonava both financial, technical and human resources were mobilised. The resources were managed by a working group - established by a decree of the Mayor of Jonava District - comprising representatives from all the Lithuanian partners.

From the Danish side both financial and technical support was provided.

Process

Design of project and submission of application

The first hurdle for the Jonava team was to design a project suitable for submission for funding.

Part of this hurdle was overcome by active participation in the 13-14 February 2001 seminar in Kaunas, Lithuania, "Environmental Aspects on Lithuanian Public Works Programmes - Towards a Tool for the Creation of Permanent Employment". The seminar - conducted by Danish experts - contained guidance to the preparation of project applications.

Another part of the hurdle was overcome by technical assistance and information provided by experts from the Lithuanian Labour Exchange during the project application period.

Establishment of collaboration between stakeholders

A sector-integrated approach requires - to become successful - the commitment from many different stakeholders. In Jonava the establishment of good collaboration did, however, not cause any major problems. One of the reasons is assessed to be that the project is a "win-win" project, i.e. all stakeholders - including people, communities etc. - benefit from the establishment of a recreational zone. Another reason is that the project has had good political backing with active involvement of the Mayor of Jonava District. A third reason is that all relevant stakeholders have been involved continuously from an early stage of project development.

Selection of unemployed participants

A success criteria for any public works project is that it leads to permanent employment for the unemployed participants. Initially, this criteria was misunderstood by some potential applicants - because they could not guarantee permanent jobs - and this led to some reluctance to host the pilot project. The criteria was therefore rephased to express an increase in employability, and the success criteria for the Jonava project was expressed as having been achieved if 6 of the 12 participants obtain a job afterwards.

To increase the chance of achieving the success criteria, emphasis was put on the selection of participants. Firstly, the health and skills of the unemployed should be suitable for carrying out outdoor environmental tasks. Secondly, the local labour exchange provided information about the possibility to participate - leading without problems to 12 motivated participants. Thirdly however, participants with an unemployment spell of above 12 months got preference to ensure that the most needing persons increased their employability.

Training of unemployed participants

The training of unemployed regarding environmental awareness and environmental skills was new to Jonava and was thus not straight-forward and easy. Much effort by the Jonava ecology and nature experts is, however, considered to have given a successful outcome - and has led not only to an environmental skills increase among the unemployed, but to an environmental skills increase among all project partners.

Lake and forest/park area cleaning

The practical tasks of lake cleaning, regeneration of planting, establishment of beach, creation of parking area, setting up of toilets etc. went afterwards fairly unproblematic.

Grand opening and afterwards?

After the grand opening of the recreational zone in June 2002 - a proper maintenance plan still needs to be produced.

Results Achieved

The verifiable results of the environmental public works project include:

- Â· Increased employability through increased environmental skills of the participants - measured by the fact that 5-7 out of the 12 unemployed participants have afterwards transferred to permanent jobs - within the environmental field.
- Â· Improved environmental awareness among all participants - unemployed as well as project partners.
- Â· A recreational zone has been established comprising a clean lake, a park area, and other convenience facilities suitable for family leisure i.e. swimming and sunbathing. At the same time, it is an environmentally sustainable area focusing on biodiversity, use of environmentally sound strategies etc. This emphasis is considered to enhance environmental awareness among the visitors.
- Â· Increased experience in project planning and implementation - not least within a sector-integrated framework - among all project partners.
- Â· Increased policy integration at local level through the experience of participating in a well

functioning working group - comprising participants from the municipality, labour exchange, environmental agency, forestry authority, and private enterprises.

Â· Altogether - the establishment of a "sunshine story", i.e. a pilot project which successfully integrates environmental and employment aspects - that can inspire other regions.

Sustainability

The integration of social, economic, environmental and cultural elements of sustainability was achieved as follows:

Financial

Firstly, it should be emphasised that the establishment of a sector-integrated projects enables/eases financial contributions from several different stakeholders. In other words, combining limited forces can lead to a substantial amount of funding. Although, this does in turn imply that persistent commitment must exist among the stakeholders - giving a risk to sustainability.

Secondly, a project such as the establishment of a recreational zone has many investment and construction costs, while the maintenance costs afterwards are much lower. Funding towards ensuring sustainable maintenance of the zone afterwards is therefore not considered to be a critical barrier.

Thirdly, there will be no immediate payback from the zone because a user charge is considered inappropriate (at least until congestion shows to become a problem).

In conclusion, financing is not expected to be a barrier for replicating the project elsewhere i.e. not a barrier for the sustainability of the idea.

Social and economic

The increase in employability among the long-term unemployed participants has in itself generated in potential increase in their standard of living.

The focus on creating a pleasant area for families to visit - free of charge - helps to enhance equality and social inclusion. In addition, the zone is located close to the City of Jonava - enabling people without access to a car to visit the area.

Cultural

The recreational zone is as mentioned several times already an example of good environmental practise - which respects and considers environmental attitudes.

Environmental

The focus on establishing a recreational zone based on ecological principles - for example regarding the rehabilitation of the forest/park and the lake - implies that environmental sustainability is high on the agenda. Sustainability will be ensured by the production of a proficient maintenance plan.

In addition, a contribution to the environmental sustainability will happen through "education" of the visitors, for example regarding not to leave litter around, but to use the provided waste disposal facilities.

Lessons Learned

Many lessons can be learned - even from a fairly small project as the present. Three of these lessons are briefly described in the following.

Possible to design and implement a project

One important lesson learned - which should be disseminated widely - is that it is possible to go all the way from a problem to actions helping to solve the problem - in a regional context. More precisely, many regions in Lithuania and elsewhere face both environmental conditions in need of improvement and high unemployment. The problems are identified and many ideas and intentions to solve the problems are in place. A main barrier to implement the ideas and intentions is, however, often a lack of

knowledge on how to produce a good project application and how and where to submit it for funding. This pilot project demonstrates that it is feasible, and it provides guidelines to how to make it feasible. In addition, the pilot project shows that it is possible to design and implement projects that attach environmental and employment problems at the same time - in a socially and environmentally sustainable way.

Possible to collaborate within a sector-integrated approach

A second central lesson learned is that collaboration within a sector-integrated approach is possible as well as very fruitful. The specific lessons learned are: Firstly, that it is important to involve all relevant stakeholders continuously from an early stage of project development. In the present project is showed beneficial to establish a working group with representatives from all stakeholders. Secondly, the project should be presented as a "win-win" project i.e. where all stakeholder benefit from the results. And, thirdly this approach enables/eases financial and other contributions from several different sources.

Possible to use best practices

A third lesson is that it is possible to use best practices - developed elsewhere. The Danish technical support provided to Jonava build on Danish experience e.g. from the Green Jobs Programme as well as results from similar projects been carried out in Estonia and Latvia - involving Danish experts.

Transferability

The results of the present pilot projects are shared or transferred in different ways:

Best Practice Guide for Policy Integration

A Best Practice Guide for Policy Integration has been produced within the "Baltic Area Sector-Integrated Environmental Assistance - Environment, Employment and Education, 1999-2001", launched by the Danish Ministry of Employment. This guide explains the concept of policy integration and gives a step-by-step introduction to the methodology. In addition, the guide includes case studies - and one of these presents the establishment of the recreational zone in Jonava.

Grand opening seminar in June 2002

When the recreational zone will be opened for visitors in June 2002 - a seminar will be held to explain the project process i.e. from problem/idea to actions/ results. Among the invited participants will be potential project developer, for example from other regions of Lithuania.

Press coverage

One of the remaining activities within the project is the production of a press release and the contacting of the press. The aim is partly to disseminate the "sunshine story" and partly to inform the inhabitants in Jonava and elsewhere about the existence of this new recreational zone.

Forthcoming Danish assistance

The targeting of the forthcoming Danish sector-integrated assistance to the Baltic Area and elsewhere is likely to consider replications of such good experiences as well as developing them further.

Inclusion in UNCHS Best Practices Database?

If this award application is assessed to be suitable for inclusion in the UNCHS Best Practices Database - this will be a central forum for sharing the results.

Key Dates

July 2001: Establishment of working group and financing

August 2001: Selection and training of unemployed participants

October 2001: Lake and forest/park area cleaned

May 2002: Final equipment and planting

June 2002 Grand opening

References

Danish Ministry of Employment and COWI, "Baltic Area Sector-Integrated Environmental Assistance - Environment, Employment and Education, 1999-2001: Best Practice Guide for Policy Integration", Version No 1, November 2001.

"Newspaper articles in local Jonava press" - see Annex I.

Contact

Mr. Eugenijus Mazunaitis
Jonava District Municipality
Zeimiu g. 13
LT-5000 Jonava
Lithuania
Tel: +370 19 61040
Fax: +370 19 51309
e-mail: jonava@is.lt

Type of Organization: Local Authority

Nominating Organization

Lithuanian Labour Exchange
Ms. Nijole Mackeviciene
Gelezinio Vilko 3A
LT-2600 Vilnius
Lithuania
Tel: +370 2 360 772
Fax: +370 2 360 788
e-mail: info@ldb.lt

Type of Organization: Central Government

Partners

Jonava Labour Exchange
Mr. Bronius Kazenas
Chemiku g. 138A
LT-5000 Jonava
Lithuania
Tel: +370 19 31001
Fax: +370 19 31001
e-mail: administrator@jonava.ldb.lt

Type of Organization: Local Authority
Type of Partner Support: Administrative Support

Jonava Environmental Agency
Mr. Zigmas Mazeika
LT-5000 Jonava
Lithuania
Tel: +370 19 51855
Fax: +370 19 51855

Type of Organization: Local Authority
Type of Partner Support: Technical Support

Danish Ministry of Employment
Mr. Carsten H?nn Olsen
Holmens Kanal 20
DK-1060 Copenhagen K
Denmark
Tel: +45 33 92 99 77
Fax: +45 33 14 67 62
e-mail: cho@am.dk

Type of Organization: Central Government
Type of Partner Support: Financial Support

Financial Profile

Year	Total Budget	Partner A (% of budget)	Partner B (%of budget)	Partner C (% of budget)
	18500	20	0	39

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